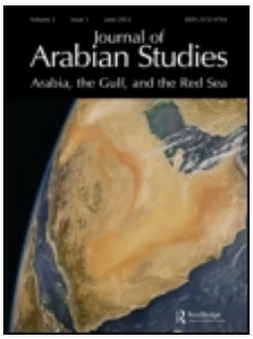

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SPECIAL SECTION

Rethinking the Monarchy–Republic Gap in the Middle East

RUSSELL E. LUCAS, THOMAS DEMMELHUBER and CLAUDIA DERICHS

In the wake of the ongoing Arab Spring, one of the many themes that garnered attention by scholars and policy analysts is the empirical fact that, of the autocratic regimes that have been overthrown, all have been republican regimes. Meanwhile, Middle Eastern monarchs have staved off sometimes massive protests with generally minor economic concessions and limited political reforms. Recent events seem to be running counter to previous social scientific understandings and concepts that saw Arab monarchies as more easily allowing for political liberalization than their republican neighbors. The observation that the institutional "rules of the game" shape political outcomes should be unsurprising in the comparative study of politics. Yet it is nevertheless important to examine what those differences are between monarchies and republics — and differences within these categories — that have resulted in their different trajectories in light of events in the Middle East since 2011. Is there still a king's dilemma or is it now presidents who face the more serious legitimacy crises today? Or do the factors that promote instability in the Middle East transcend particular institutional arrangements?

In order to investigate these questions, an international group of scholars met at the University of Marburg, Germany, in September 2012 and explored answers to these issues in a workshop entitled *Rethinking the Monarchy–Republic Gap in the Middle East*. A selection of the papers presented at the workshop — especially those that deal with the Arabian Peninsula — are included in the special section of this issue. They deal with three themes that arose out of the workshop's discussions.

First, does the perceived gap between republics and monarchies extend beyond noting that there were regime changes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen and not in other states? André Bank, Thomas Richter, and Anna Sunik explore this theme in "Durable, Yet Different: Monarchies in the Arab Spring", which builds on their earlier research in exploring the trajectories of the survival and breakdown of monarchical regimes across the region since 1945. In this article, they find that the three types of monarchies in the Arab world — dynastic (exemplified in their article by Qatar), linchpin (exemplified by Jordan), and the hybrid "linchtier" monarchy

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(Oman) — each reacted differently to the challenges of the Arab Spring based on preexisting regime variations.

Second, if there is a gap, then how can it be explained theoretically? Claudia Derichs and Thomas Demmelhuber argue in "Monarchies and Republics, State and Regime, Durability and Fragility in View of the Arab Spring" that, in the case of the Gulf monarchies, state and regime are different categories, yet two sides of the same coin. Using the emerging "social order" approach and the impact of pre-state patterns, they focus on the intertwining of state and regime in the Gulf monarchies to explain how political change does and does not take place in these countries. In contrast, Russell E. Lucas argues that existing frameworks derived from the New Institutional approach to authoritarian survival and Social Movement Theory approaches to protests and contestation — if synthesized properly — are sufficient to understand the republic–monarchy gap in the Middle East.

And third, what is the impact of this gap on the political outcomes of events during 2011, and since then, in specific cases from the Arabian Peninsula? Kristian Coates Ulrichsen argues that, in the case of Kuwait, the increasing strength of the opposition coupled with tensions within the ruling family have broken through old boundaries. The result is that Kuwaiti domestic politics has become dynamic, fluid, and relentlessly unstable. Vânia Carvalho Pinto argues that the UAE has transformed its international self-image from that of a follower into that of a role model as part of a political evolution that had begun before 2011, but has materialized in the country's solidified international assertiveness in the wake of the Arab Spring.

As conveners of the 2012 workshop and as special section editors, we have numerous people to thank for helping move this project forward. The Fritz Thyssen Foundation provided invaluable financial support for this project. We also wish to thank all the participants of the workshop for their papers and commentaries — especially Michael Herb, Marianne Kneuer, Roel Meijer, Katja Neithammer, Arash Reisinezhad, Nadine Scharfenort, Michael Schmidmayr, Christoph Schumann, and Mareike Transfeld. While their works do not appear in this special section, their suggestions and ideas helped shape the articles. We would also like to recognize the editorial assistance of Elena Kuhley. Finally, we would also like to thank James Onley, N. Janardhan, and Meena Janardhan of the *Journal of Arabian Studies* for all their efforts in bringing this project into print.